

The pursuit of knowledge is rarely confined to a single discipline. True understanding often emerges at the intersections—where economic data meets historical context, where cultural narratives inform public health, and where ancient social structures echo in contemporary challenges. The diverse contributions in this combined issue of the *Journal of Indian Research* exemplify this interdisciplinary spirit, offering a multifaceted examination of core issues that have shaped, and continue to shape, the Indian experience.

There is a significant macroeconomic inquiry by Dr. Vinod Kumar Adwani, who introduces a novel metric, the Gross Domestic Aggregate Consumption (GDAC) and its corresponding index. His study of the world's top ten economies moves beyond traditional production-centric measures like GDP to foreground *consumption* as the ultimate purpose of economic activity. The GDAC Index revealingly categorizes economies as surplus, par, or deficit, measuring their self-reliance. The finding of a strong, positive correlation between production and consumption is intuitive yet powerful. More intriguing is the longitudinal observation that, on average, these major economies have reduced their import dependency over the last eighteen years, a trend that invites deeper analysis into shifting global supply chains and national policies aimed at economic resilience.

This macroeconomic perspective finds a profound historical echo in the paper by Dr. Krishna K. Mandal, which delves into the very origins of organized production and consumption in the Indian subcontinent. Mandal's exploration of the peasant mode of production in the middle Gangetic plains (c. 600–300 BCE) reveals the foundational role of iron technology, private land ownership (*khattasamika*), and key actors like the *gahapatis* and *kutumbins*. This was not a simple subsistence economy; it was a complex system generating a taxable surplus, stratified by social class and reliant on servile labour (*dasa-kammakaras*), which supported the state and the emerging Buddhist *sangha*. The triadic relationship between the land-owning peasantry, the state, and religious institutions established a socio-economic template whose legacies are still discernible today. The struggle for control over produce, the stratification of rural society, and the tension between the landowner and the labourer are not merely historical footnotes but are central to understanding the enduring structures of India's agrarian economy.

It is precisely these enduring structures and their contemporary representations that Dr. Jyotsna Pathak critiques in her analysis of Bollywood cinema. Her paper, “*Negotiating Indianness*,” traces the cinematic journey of the Indian farmer from the post-independence realist critiques of *Do Bigha Zamin* and *Mother India* to the post-liberalization romanticism of *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*. Pathak argues that while early films courageously highlighted agrarian distress, exploitation, and the human cost of nation-building, later narratives often obscured these harsh realities under a veneer of nostalgia and pastoral idealism. This cinematic shift from critical engagement to romantic portrayal raises critical questions about how national identity is constructed and whose stories are valorized or erased in the process. The farmer, once depicted as a victim of systemic injustice, is often reimagined as a symbol of timeless,

virtuous rural life, a transformation that can mask the persistent crises of debt, suicide, and economic vulnerability that plague the agricultural sector.

Finally, shifting from the macro and the historical to the micro and the contemporary, Zaidul Sulaiman and Dr. Sonia Singla present a psychological study on the bidirectional relationship between smoking and stress. While focused on individual coping mechanisms, their research touches on a broader public health crisis. The study finds a moderate, though not statistically significant, correlation between perceived stress and smoking frequency, with qualitative insights confirming that individuals often use cigarettes as a short-term coping mechanism, inadvertently entering a cycle of nicotine dependence that exacerbates long-term stress. This work underscores the importance of integrated public health strategies that address the root causes of stress, particularly in a rapidly modernizing society where economic pressures and social transitions can create significant psychological burdens.

Together, these papers form a compelling, albeit indirect, dialogue. They illustrate a chain of phenomena stretching from the ancient formation of economic systems and their modern measurement, to their representation in cultural narratives, and finally, to their impact on individual well-being and health outcomes. The struggles of the *gahapati* to manage land, labour, and surplus find a distant relative in the modern economic metrics of national self-reliance. The portrayal of the farmer's plight in classic cinema informs our understanding of a national identity that is still grappling with its agrarian roots. And the stress of navigating a complex, often unequal economy manifests in the personal, unhealthy coping strategies of its citizens.

This issue, therefore, stands as a testament to the power of interdisciplinary research. It reminds us that the economic, the historical, the cultural, and the psychological are not separate threads but are tightly woven into the rich, complex, and ongoing story of India. I hope the researchers are benefitted from the current compact issue containing well-researched and articulated papers from scholars from across South Asia!

– Dr. Vinesh Agarwal
Editor